



# DEEPLY ROOTED

*Cultivating Communities of Welcome*



Lutheran Immigration  
and Refugee Service

ANNUAL REPORT 2017



## Letter from Bp. Mike Rinehart, Chair of the Board

2017 brought many changes. The administration's new policies and narratives altered the landscape for individuals and families seeking refuge in America. In the wake of unprecedented threats to U.S. refugee resettlement and increasingly restrictive immigration policy, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) has been reinvigorated by our mission to protect, embrace, and empower those we serve.

LIRS supporters rose to the occasion. A swell of donors, advocates, and communities nationwide got more deeply involved in our work of welcome. Longtime donors increased their contributions, first-time advocates made phone calls to congress, and new supporters pledged generous support to the cause.

Meanwhile, LIRS' deep roots in communities across the country continued to cultivate a vast and intricate network of welcome – a safety net that serves to protect and embrace refugees and migrant families when they most need our support.

Our impact was expanded through our capacity to engage communities of faith, partner with the private sector, and mobilize a network of advocates.

Together, we welcomed families at the airport; we visited families in detention; we opened up new paths for refugee employment; we secured mental health support for vulnerable youth; and we challenged political leaders to uphold the legacy and the values upon which this country was built.

Supporters like you, inspired by compassion and a commitment to our mission, continue to make this vital work possible. We simply couldn't do it without you.

Thank you for standing with refugees and migrants at this important time.

Yours in faith,

**BISHOP MIKE RINEHART**

*LIRS Board Chair*

Michael Rinehart, bishop  
Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



# A Snapshot of LIRS Impact in 2017

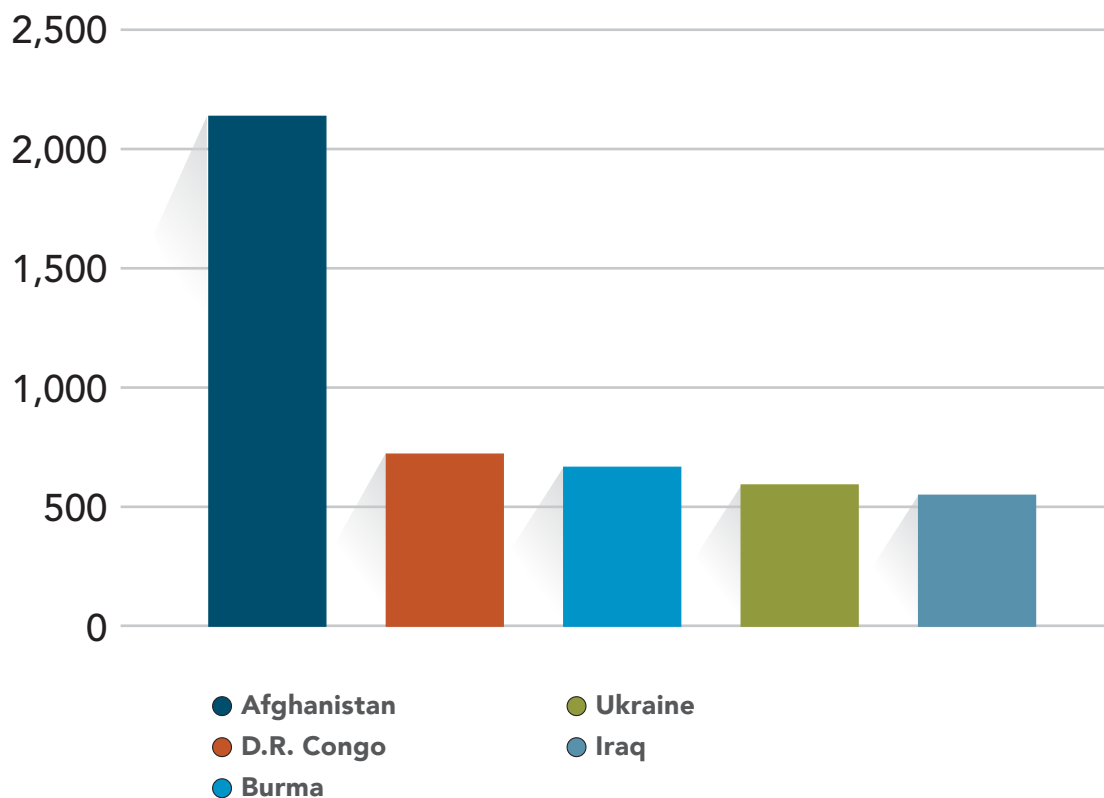
**22,703** total children served

including **1,125** unaccompanied refugee minors.

**7,107** refugees resettled

including **2,362** individuals in SIV Program

## LIRS REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT: TOP COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN





# Engaging Communities of Faith

## A NEW CIRCLE OF WELCOME

2017 marked the launch of the LIRS Circle of Welcome. This program is an innovative co-sponsorship initiative that connects participating communities with LIRS network partners to expand support for refugee families as they begin to rebuild their lives in America.

Last year, 18 communities of faith stepped up to be a part of our Circle of Welcome – meeting families at the airport, helping them learn English and navigate community spaces, and welcoming them into their hearts and homes.

**Having provided more than 1,000 refugees direct support from community-based initiatives like Circle of Welcome, LIRS leads the field of refugee resettlement in implementation of co-sponsorship and community mentorship programming.**


As we explore new ways to engage communities in our work of welcome, we have been inspired by the powerful response of faith-based organizations from across the country.



*"Our communities and our neighborhoods, along with thousands of refugees, will benefit from the Circle of Welcome program. I pray that it grows rapidly throughout the USA and maybe the world – one family at a time."*

— ORVILLE JOHNSON, MEMBER OF LIRS BOARD OF DIRECTORS SINCE 2016





*"To see is to believe; to believe is to act; to act is to change policies for justice. Given the current state of affairs, this is the right time to do visitation."*

— THE REVEREND JACK EGGLESTON, DIRECTOR FOR  
EVANGELICAL MISSION IN SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN ELCA

## COMPASSIONATE SERVICE IN IMMIGRATION DETENTION

For more than a decade, LIRS has worked to cultivate a network of communities committed to bringing hope to children and families locked up in immigration detention facilities. Today, this effort has grown to encompass everything from letter-writing and holiday gift campaigns to advocacy on Capitol Hill and detention visitation. Communities of faith have been at the heart of these efforts, moved by compassion to visit strangers in detention and give generously of their gifts. In 2017, this network remained a fixture of hope for families in detention.

**830** *volunteers* visited detention centers and met with more than **1,892** *detainees*.

**268** *pen pal volunteers* wrote letters to detainees.

Over **85** *congregations, universities, and community groups* participated in LIRS's Hope for the Holidays campaign – providing **805** *holiday gifts* and **3,985** *holiday cards* to families and children in immigration detention centers.



"Our partnership with LIRS has been a rich blessing to our community. The Afghan family we have been assisting has been an inspiring witness to the values of faith, family, and community.

We have been welcomed into their lives as we shared their grief from being separated from a large and loving extended family back home. We have been invited to break fast with them during Ramadan. We have helped to welcome a new child with a baby shower at church. We have provided rides and advice and financial support and friendship.

In the end, LIRS's Circle of Welcome Program has given us the opportunity to extend the love of Christ by helping this family make a new home in our area. They are a blessing to our congregation, our community, and our country."

— PASTOR CHAD BREKKE,  
PRINCE OF PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, MN









# Partnering with the Private Sector

## REBUILDING DREAMS THROUGH EMPLOYMENT


LIRS believes that it is not enough to simply relocate refugees to a safe community; we are committed to building an extended network of support that accompanies them along the path to becoming healthy, contributing members of society. One important facet of this approach is fostering mutually beneficial relationships between refugee communities and the businesses that employ them.

LIRS programs like *Rebuilding Dreams*, launched in 2017, take an innovative approach that empowers employers to be a part of the growth and development of the refugees in their employment. Working in tandem with LIRS, businesses across the country have launched refugee-empowerment initiatives, from English language and financial literacy courses to investments in child care centers and community infrastructure.

## LIRS & THE TENT PARTNERSHIP FOR REFUGEES

In 2017, LIRS collaborated with the Tent Partnership for Refugees to develop the *U.S. Employers' Guide to Hiring Refugees*. As a mobilizing force for the private sector to support refugees, the Tent Foundation sought LIRS's expertise on hiring just as many companies were offering strong public commitments to employing and investing in refugees and their communities.

Leveraging LIRS's 20 years of experience providing employment assistance to national resettlement organizations, the *Hiring Guide* helps corporations better understand who refugees are, their journeys through the complicated resettlement process, the benefits of hiring refugees, and the solutions for overcoming workplace challenges.



"Refugees are highly motivated and loyal employees who bring unique skill sets to the workplace. Tent is proud to partner with the LIRS on this comprehensive guide that highlights the benefits that refugees bring to companies and helps companies tap into this resilient and valuable workforce."

— GIDEON MALTZ, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE TENT PARTNERSHIP



*"I was interested in hiring refugees and asylees because I was having difficulty recruiting within the Baltimore labor market... Working with a resettlement agency has been awesome. I know without a doubt that they always have candidates who are willing to work and grateful to have a job."*

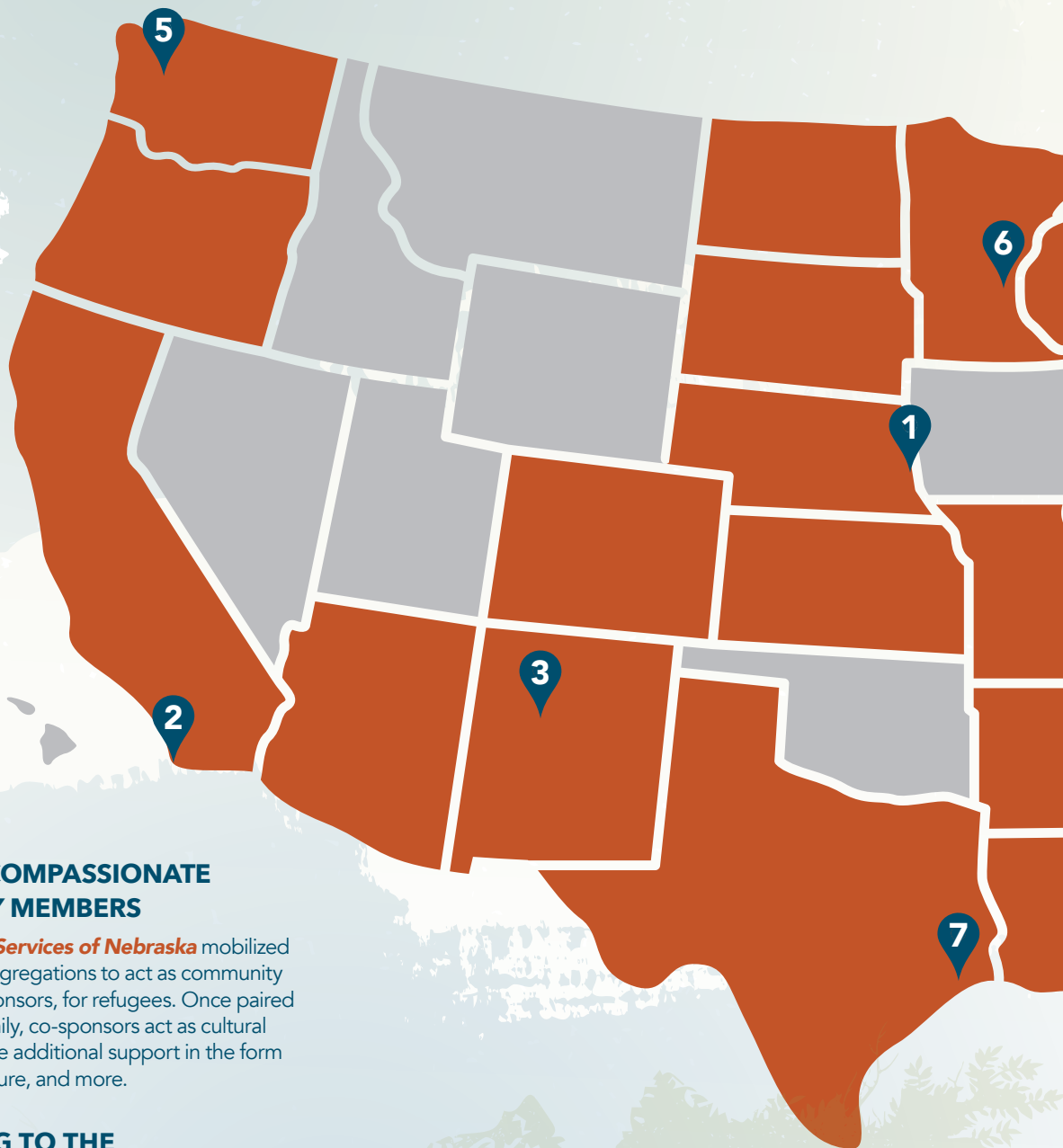
**— SOPHINE GRAYSON, HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER, HILTON GARDEN INN & HOMEWOOD SUITES BALTIMORE INNER HARBOR, BALTIMORE, MD**





## ANNUAL REPORT 2017

\*Note: States highlighted in orange represent the LIRS network.



**Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska** mobilized nearly 75 local congregations to act as community mentors, or co-sponsors, for refugees. Once paired with a refugee family, co-sponsors act as cultural guides and provide additional support in the form of groceries, furniture, and more.

As persecution intensified overseas for the Rohingya Muslim minority group, **Crittenton** launched a new group home to accommodate the emergency placement of 7 unaccompanied Rohingya youth. Having fled unimaginable atrocities, these young refugees are now in good hands, receiving mental health services, educational support, and everything they need to start fresh.

**Lutheran Family Services of the Rocky Mountains** launched the Newcomer Academy, a summer school program for newly-arrived refugees. The four-week program provided academic support to 40 students preparing to enter middle school and high school – with emphasis on English, Math, and computer literacy.





## 5 HONORING THOSE WHO SERVED

**Lutheran Community Services Northwest** welcomed 200 individuals and families who fled to the U.S. under the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) Program. After offering services to U.S. troops in their native countries, these individuals became vulnerable political targets and were forced to leave their homes.

## 6 PIONEERING A NEW FORM OF WELCOME

**Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota** was among the first LIRS partners to join our new Circle of Welcome Program in 2017. Since then, they have partnered with 18 volunteer teams to serve over 100 refugees through this innovative initiative.



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## 4 ADVOCATING FOR POLITICAL SUPPORT

**Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees** leveraged local support for refugees and community advocacy to secure \$2 million in the 2017-2018 New York state budget for refugee resettlement. For decades, Utica has been uniquely supportive of refugees, earning the nickname "the Town That Loves Refugees."

## 7 WEATHERING A FIERCE HURRICANE SEASON

In the wake of Hurricanes Irma and Harvey, **Lutheran Services of Florida** and **Refugee Services of Texas** supported refugee families and children who had been displaced from their homes, coordinating the distribution of food, financial assistance, other vital services.



# Mobilizing a Network of Advocates

## LIRS MIGRANT & REFUGEE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY 2017

As part of our mission to stand with refugees and migrants, LIRS works to empower refugees and our network partners to engage in advocacy on both local and national levels. Each year, we host the Migrant & Refugee Leadership Academy (MRLA), an event dedicated to equipping refugees and migrants with the tools to tell their unique story. Participants come away from the event as “alumni” and go on to become leaders and advocates in their own local communities.

In 2017, the three-day summit came to a close on World Refugee Day, during which Academy participants met with more than 53 congressional offices and had in-person meetings with Congressman Mike Coffman (R-CO), Senator Jeff Flake (R-AZ), Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR), and Congressman Chris Stewart (R-UT).

*“Since the 1980’s, Colorado has become home to nearly 48,000 refugees from all around the world. The work that Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) does is critical to their success—and has a real impact. As a Representative to one of the country’s most diverse congressional districts, I stand with LIRS in support of their efforts in assisting immigrants as they become part of the fabric of our country.”*

**— CONGRESSMAN MIKE COFFMAN  
(R-COLORADO)**





## THE FIGHT FOR FAMILIES AT OUR BORDER

As efforts to restrict immigration intensified in 2017, LIRS saw an increasing number of immigration enforcement cases separating children from their parents at our borders.

LIRS worked tirelessly to give a voice to these families, submitting testimony for the record during key congressional hearings, equipping members of Congress to speak out against family separation on the floor, and joining coalition partners to submit a formal complaint to the Officer of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties at the Department of Homeland Security.

Since the submission of this complaint, the issue has garnered national media attention and the ACLU filed a federal lawsuit challenging the practice. Guided by our mission, LIRS will continue to defend the rights of children and families at our border until the inhumane practice of separation is rendered obsolete.

*"[My three-year old son] Sami begged not to be taken away and put his arms around me. I grasped him firmly in my arms. I told the officials that I would not give him up, and that they would have to take him from me. Then, one of the officers came up to me and with both hands forcefully pulled [Sami] out of my arms."*

— FEDERICO

*"When I finally spoke to Rodrigo, [my five-year old son], we both cried. He seemed very upset. He asked why his father had left him. I did not know what to tell him to make him feel better. He is far too young to be separated from his parents. He is in a foreign country where everything seems different and there is no one around him that he knows."*

— SOFIA



# Growing the LIRS Family

In the midst of unprecedented challenges for refugee resettlement and immigration, LIRS supporters rose to the occasion in an extraordinary way in 2017. Our donor base expanded by more than 3,000 new donors, underscoring the vital importance of our mission ... and sending a powerful message of solidarity to leaders in Congress and the children and refugees we serve.

You make everything we do at LIRS possible. And, for that, we are unspeakably grateful.





# A Snapshot of Our Support

**3,000** new donors

**401** former refugees

Uniting donors of **many faiths**,  
including Buddhism, Islam, & Judaism

**Dozens** of Christian denominations

Representing **ALL 50** states



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## THE GIVING TREE: DONORS SHARE THEIR REASONS



"We are Jesus' hands and feet.

How can we not help!?!"

"I was a stranger and

you welcomed me."

"I support LIRS because it serves as a way for me to use my privilege  
of citizenship to welcome and advocate for those seeking a new home."

"I am the grandson of immigrants."

"You do a great job in providing much-needed services."

"My wife was an immigrant."



# Finances for 2017

## Statement of Financial Position

AT DECEMBER 31, 2017

Dollars in thousands

### Assets

Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$13,040
U.S. Government Receivable	\$3,106
Investment in Lutheran Center Corporation	\$3,467
Other Assets	\$2,089

**TOTAL ASSETS \$21,702**

### Liabilities and Net Assets

Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	\$8,303
Long-term Debt	\$1,920

**Total Liabilities \$10,223**

### Net Assets

Unrestricted	\$10,833
Temporarily Restricted	\$645

**Total Net Assets \$11,479**

**TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS \$21,702**

## Statement of Activities & Changes in Net Assets

FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2017

Dollars in thousands

### Support & Revenue

Contributions	\$4,418
U.S. Government and State	\$45,551
Fees and Other Revenue	\$2,340

**TOTAL SUPPORT AND REVENUE \$52,309**

### Expenses

Program Services	\$46,862
Management and General	\$5,043
Fundraising	\$1,164

**Total Expenses \$50,069**

**Change in Net Assets \$2,240**

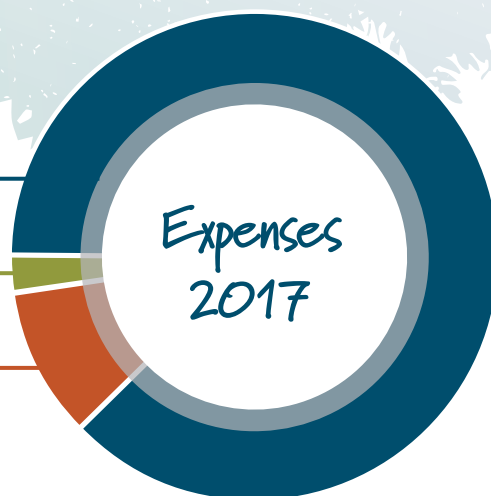
**Net Assets, Beginning of Year \$9,162**

**Net Assets, End of Year \$11,479**

**PROGRAM SERVICES 88%**

**FUNDRAISING 2%**

**MANAGEMENT  
AND GENERAL 10%**





# 2017 LIRS Board of Directors

## Executive Committee

Board Chair — The Rev. Michael Rinehart

Vice Chair — Ms. Linda Stoterau

Board Treasurer — Mr. William Swanson

Board Secretary— Mr. Evan Moilan

Executive Member at Large — Ms. Judith Benke

## At-Large Members

Ms. Faith Ashton

Mr. Wilmot Collins

The Rev. J. Bart Day

Ms. Lori Fedyk

Mr. Ted Goins

Ms. Melissa Graves

Mr. Orville Johnson

Ms. Esther López

Ms. Evelyn Soto

Ms. Selena Sujoldzic



**Lutheran Immigration  
and Refugee Service**

**AS A WITNESS TO GOD'S LOVE FOR ALL PEOPLE, WE STAND WITH AND ADVOCATE  
FOR MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES, TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES THROUGH  
MINISTRIES OF SERVICE AND JUSTICE.**





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and Refugee Service

